

*Special Article***Al Zubair Pasha (1831-1913)****A medical report on health profile and cause of death**

Siddiq Ibrahim Khalil

نبذة مختصرة

يحتوي هذا البحث على تقرير طبي عن سبب وفاة الزبير باشا احد الشخصيات السودانية الهامة التي عاشت في القرن التاسع عشر. كما ويشير البحث الى الوسائل الطبية و العلاج المتاح في ذلك الزمان و يسرد باختصار جزا من تاريخ حياته. ولد الزبير باشا عام 1831 و توفي في عام 1913.

يذكر ان الزبير باشا بدا حياته تاجرا في منطقة بحر الغزال و استطاع ان يجمع ثروة طائلة و اصبحت له نفوذ و قوة عسكرية هائلة. وقد أفاد ذلك الحكم التركي كثيرا كما و أسهم الزبير في احتلال دار فور و المناطق المجاورة لها و نتيجة لذلك عينه الاتراك حاكما على بحر الغزال. ذهب الزبير الى مصر لمقابلة الخديوي الا انه اعتقل و ظل هناك حتى عام 1904. و عاد نهائيا الى السودان في عام 1912 حيث استقر في منزله بالجيلي.

ومرض الزبير باشا فعاده دكتور اسكوير اخصائي الباطنية بأمر من الحاكم العام. و قد اجري كشفا طبيا كاملا و اخذ عينات منالدم أرسلت الى المعمل الوحيد في ذلك الزمان وهو مختبر ولكم للبحوث الطبية و الذي كان يرأسه الدكتور أندرو بالفور Welcome Research Laboratory. و قد أظهرت نتائج الفحص المخبري عن إصابة الزبير باشا بملاريا حادة ادت الى وفاته في 1913/1/6.

Abstract

This article is a medical report about Zubair Pasha's final illness and the cause of his death. It also documents how medical treatment was perceived and practiced in Sudan in the early years of the British rule at the turn of the twentieth century. Zubair Pasha was born in 1831 and died in 1913, almost hundred years ago.

Zubair had dictated his life story to Naoum Shugair in Cairo in 1900. In that succinct account Zubair described how he strived to build a successful business kingdom that existed in Bahr Al Ghazal. He traded in ivory, ostrich feather, cattle, metals and all types of seeds; as a result he gained huge wealth and influence. Additionally he helped extend the Turkish rule to Darfour and the neighboring districts. Despite that Zubair was retained in Egypt for more nearly thirty years. He came back after the reconquest of Sudan and stayed at El Geili, his home town.

Dr Squire who was the physician at Khartoum Civil Hospital was sent by the Governor General of Sudan to attend to Zubair who was seriously ill in Al Geili, his home town.

This article includes the medical report of Dr Squire in 4/1/1913. The final cause of death was described in the report of Dr Andrew Balfour (Head of Welcome Laboratory in Khartoum) as heavy infection with quartan malaria parasite and both ring and crescent forms of malignant tertian parasites were found. Despite treatment with quinine Zubair died two days later.

**Figure 1.****Introduction**

This article is a medical report about Al Zubair Pasha's final illness and the cause of his death. I have deliberately alluded to a short historical review about this controversial and interesting Sudanese

character that played an important role in the history of Sudan during the Turkish rule. Zubair was born in 1831 and died in 1913 (Figure 1).

Historical background

Most of the available history of Zubair Pasha was obtained from British colonial sources which were highly biased and misrepresentative. Dr. Bousfield described

Professor of Cardiology, Sudan Heart Institute,
Khartoum, Sudan. Correspondence to Siddiq Ibrahim
Khalil, PO Box 2850 Khartoum, Phone: 0912385045
Email: psiddiq@gmail.com.

Zubair was a cruel, crafty, heartless man probably one of the greatest slave dealers the world has ever seen¹. Gordon described him as "without doubt the greatest slave hunter that ever existed"². However what is reported by Sudanese historians is entirely different from those British sources³. There was no mention of Zubair being slave trader in Makki Shibaika book "Sudan Abr Al Ghoroon". Zubair has also dictated his life story to Naoum Shugair in Cairo in 1900⁴. In that succinct account Zubair described how he strived to build a successful business kingdom that existed in Bahr Al Ghazal. He traded in ivory, ostrich feather, cattle, metals and all types of seeds; as a result he gained huge wealth and influence. Additionally he helped extend the Turkish rule to Darfur and the neighboring districts. As a result he was appointed governor of Bahr El Ghazal. In spite of his successful efforts in extending the Turkish rule to that part of Sudan; the Turkish rulers were distrustful of Zubair and considered him a potential rival who could easily become the sole ruler of Sudan. This situation had translated into animosity to Zubair, led by the Turkish governor and later General Gordon the then newly appointed governor of Equatoria. Zubair was provoked to go to Cairo in order to meet the Khedive. Following his departure to Egypt in 1875 Gordon confiscated his wealth, property and imprisoned members of his family including women and children. Gordon also conspired against Zubair son, Suleiman, and managed to kill him aided by his Italian assistant Gessi. During the 30 years of his captivity in Egypt Zubair was forced to join the Turkish army in the fight against Russia in what was known as the Turkish-Russian war. In 1885 when the Mahdist Revolution broke out in Sudan, Zubair was exiled to Gibraltar for 30 months to prevent him escape and possibly join the Mahdi's war against the Turks. In 1904 after occupation of Sudan by the Anglo-Egyptian forces, Zubair, then 73 years old, was allowed to return to Sudan. He stayed in Sudan for two years and returned to Halwan in Egypt. Dr. Bousfield met him during this time and described him in a note

"in 1909, I met in Cairo Zubair Pasha. At that period he was an elderly man perhaps in the seventies, thin, lithe and active, very intelligent, rather benign-looking and with bright clear eyes. He appeared to be of Arab stock. As we walked and talked pleasantly enough, it was difficult to believe I was accompanying a cruel crafty heartless man". Bousfield fair description of Zubair was offset by his old convictions that Zubair was slave trader.

Following 1910-1912 Zubair finally returned to Sudan. He stayed at his house in Omdurman and later at El Geili where he died. Dr Squire the physician at Khartoum Civil Hospital gave a precise report about the final illness of Zubair Pasha:

The medical report

"On the fourth of January 1913, I was rung up by Slatin who told me that Zubair was ill in his house at Geili and the Governor-General wanted to have a report on his condition; that a launch would be ready for me in an hour's time as that would be the quickest way of my getting to see him. The launch was small but it had a cabin that gave some shelter and with the current it could be counted on to do about ten miles an hour. It was not after four o'clock that I reached my destination and walked up from the river bank through cultivation to the village. Through crowds of waiting neighbors and relations I was directed to a large mud building and was shown into a spacious room. A brass European bedstead had been deprived of its cotton mattress which had been placed upon the floor. Zubair was lying on it and by his side knelt two women, one light-coloured, mature and dignified and the other a young girl of perhaps eighteen. The history given me was that he had taken a chill after bathing a few days before, and after removal to Geili he had become unconscious. He was dark skinned with clear-cut Arab features and the corneae were glazed as the result of attacks of keratitis. He was restless and toxic, hypersensitive to stimuli, showed marked twitching of the face and limbs and could not be roused. There were no definite signs in the

heart or lungs, his liver spleen were not enlarged and the temperature was normal. Heart sounds were weak and pulse very irregular. He was said to be feverish at times. No sample of urine was available and none could be obtained though I waited for two hours. I thought he was suffering from uraemia but I took several blood smears, gave simple directions as to treatment and left on my return at 6:30 having wired the Governor-General that the patient condition was precarious. The launch broke down on my journey back and finally arrived Khartoum at 1:30 AM. I had sent the blood film to the labs and was rung up in the morning by Dr Andrew Balfour (Head of Welcome Laboratory in Khartoum) to be told that there was heavy infection with quartan malaria parasite and both ring and crescent forms of malignant tertian parasites being found. A Syrian medical officer was immediately dispatched with supplies of quinine and other

drugs but his efforts were unavailing and Zubair died two days later²."

This report documents how clinical examination and medical treatment were perceived and practiced in Sudan in the early years of the British rule at the turn of the twentieth century.

The death of Zubair Pasha (Al Zubair Rahama Mansour) on 16th January 1913, almost one hundred years ago, put a final end to a life full of hardly earned achievements hampered by intrigues and injustice.

References:

- 1- Bousfield LD. Sudan Doctor. , London: Christopher Johnson 1954; pp 183.
- 2- Squire HC. Sudan Medical Service. London: William Heinemann 1958; pp 34.
- 3- Makki Shibaika. Sudan Abr Al Ghoroon(Arabic). Bayrout: Dar Al Jeel 1964; pp182
- 4- Naoum Shugair. History and Geography of Sudan. Bayrout: Dar Al Thagafa 1903 pp 568